

SITUATION REPORT NO. 1

INCIDENT NO. 2004-014

DATE: February 10, 2004 Time: 4:00 p.m.

TO: Governor John Hoeven
State Capitol
Bismarck ND 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Severe Winter Weather - Excessive snow and high winds are creating drifts up to 20 feet, impeding snow removal efforts in the northwestern portion of the state. County emergency managers have reported township and county snow removal resources are not sufficient to move snow.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: No deaths or injuries have been reported.
3. DAMAGES: The National Weather Service (NWS) upgraded its winter warnings and advisories to a blizzard warning for western and central North Dakota for the evening of February 10, 2004, through the morning of February 11, 2004. The center of a strong Alberta Clipper will bring northwest winds of 35 miles per hour (mph) to 50 mph to western and central North Dakota. Meteorologists report the storm will bring an additional inch of snow to existing snow pack, producing ground blizzard conditions in open areas. Wind chills will fall to 20 below by daybreak on February 11.

Northwestern counties have reported the following:

BURKE: County, city and township crews have been continually plowing roads due to large amounts of snow and blizzard conditions. The high cost of snow removal has exceeded county resources. The NWS reported the county has had 56.3 inches during this snow season, which ranges from October through March.

DIVIDE: Since the first major snowfall of 12 inches on October 29, 2003, the NWS reported the county has received 51.5 inches of snow so far this winter. Local officials indicate the average snowfall for this time of year is 20.1 inches. The combination of snowfall and strong winds has made snowfall removal operations difficult.

MCKENZIE: The snow accumulation has currently reached more than 48 inches, which is the 10-year average for the entire winter season, according to local officials. Severe cold temperatures, along with the large accumulation of snow, have stressed area livestock. The area has endured power outages for several hours along with power surges. On one occasion, an ambulance crew's response to a heart patient was delayed while a snowplow cleared a road. More than 700 hours of overtime has been expended on snow removal operations.

MOUNTRAIL: Extreme winter conditions, characterized by heavy snowfall and bitter cold, have been reported by local officials. The county has received 46.8 inches of snow, according to the NWS. All ditches are full with snow accumulation. There is a minimum of 18 to 24 inches of snow in open fields. Snow drifts range from six to eight feet high in sheltered areas. Many roads are limited to one-lane access as the plows cannot push the snow pack back any longer. The deer population has moved into haystacks and has been destroying hay supplies and local vegetation. Gas, diesel, repairs and utility bills are mounting for local residents. Accumulated snow has damaged farm outbuildings and porches.

RENVILLE: Snow fall of up to 45 inches has been reported by the NWS. High winds and continued snowfall have made some roads impassable at times.

WILLIAMS: The County Emergency Manager reported on February 10 that schools are being closed as a result of a storm that is moving through the region. Roads conditions are deteriorating due to blowing and drifting snow. During the month of January, Williams County was subjected to several winter storms, accompanied with strong winds and cold temperatures, resulting in several township road closures. Ten- to 20-foot snow drifts have narrowed county roads to one lane. The NWS reported 54.5 inches of snow so far this season. Local officials indicated the average temperature for January 2004 was 4.1 degrees with snow accumulation of 25.4 inches. The Williams County Highway Department is currently working to widen the roads but is having serious difficulty with snow drifts that are higher than the county equipment can handle. The county has hired private contractors to assist with snow removal. Many township roads were closed due to the amount of snow and snow drifts. Even after cuts are made to open the roads, the winds are blowing the loose snow, resulting in road closures. County road crews and private contractors are working to maintain roads due to recurring snow drifts. The county utilized graders and dozers but was limited in areas to push the snow and must now remove it. Equipment budgets of townships and small communities are reported to be extremely limited.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: Local agencies responding to the emergency included law enforcement, city and county administration offices, city, county and township public works departments, communications centers, emergency management offices, private contractors and emergency medical services.

STATE: The Governor's Office, N.D. Department of Transportation, the N.D. National Guard and the N.D. Division of Emergency Management/State Radio Communications are monitoring conditions.

FEDERAL: The NWS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security have been notified of the serious conditions.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: Local residents and farmers have used their own equipment to aid in snow removal.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: On February 3, 2004, the Boards of County Commissioners for Burke, Divide, Mountrail, Renville and Williams Counties issued emergency declarations and ordered the activation and utilization of their County Emergency Operations Plans.

The Williston District of the N.D. Department of Transportation (DOT) has assisted counties with clearing county roads at junctions with state highways. DOT notified the State Operations Center (SOC) that the worst areas in the Williston District are north of Highway 50 along Highways 42 and 85.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: As indicated.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: As indicated.
9. OTHER INFORMATION: The N.D. Division of Emergency Management's Situation Reports are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director